

AUTHENTICATION *of Hadith* · REDEFINING THE CRITERIA



ISRAR AHMAD KHAN

AUTHENTICATION OF HADITH

Redefining the Criteria

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9–Reference to Eve as the Root Cause of Women’s Infidelity to their Husbands

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim have both recorded a tradition on the authority of Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet said: “Were it not for the children of Israel, food would never become rotten and meat would never putrefy; were it not for Eve, no woman would ever become unfaithful to her husband.”⁵⁶

This tradition traces the cause of two things, decay of food items and the infidelity of women, to the children of Israel and to the mother of mankind respectively. In other words food decay is blamed on the children of Israel and women’s unfaithfulness on Eve. If this is the case can one logically surmise that food items did not rot prior to the time of the children of Israel! Al-Nawawī quotes some anonymous scholars as stating that when the children of Israel stored these special food items, *al-mann* (a type of sweet gum) and *al-salwā* (quails), defying an instruction not to do so, these foods became rotten and the decay of food items in general has continued since this time.⁵⁷ This line of argument raises several questions. First, was the storing of food items so serious an offense that the whole of humanity had to pay the price? Second, why would the whole of mankind be punished for the belligerency of a section? Third, why was the punishment widened in scope to include all food items aside from *al-mann wa al-salwā*? Fourth, were those elements in food items that are vulnerable to decay non-existent in food items before the children of Israel’s actions? There seems to be no easy answer to these logical questions.

The Qur’an has mentioned the blessings of Allah upon the followers of Moses. One such blessing appeared in the form of certain special food items known as, *al-mann wa al-salwā*. We find mention of these in three places, 2:57; 7:160; and 20:80. Here and in other places where the case of the children of Israel has been mentioned, one may also find mention of various offenses which the children of Israel committed and also the punishment commensurate with those sins. None of these descriptions contain any reference to Israelite defiance concerning storage of these food items sent by God. The Qur’an reiterates time and again that it is the major sins which earn the displeasure of Allah, and the storage of food items does not constitute from any perspective a major crime. Aside from this, there is no mention in the genuine sources (the

Qur'an and Hadith literature) that the children of Israel had ever been forbidden to store this or any other food.

The Qur'an also makes clear that punishment is reserved only for those who have committed sin and not for those who have not: "And if anyone earns sin, he earns it against his own soul: for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom" (4:111). According to the Qur'an, the burden of one person will not be placed on another: "And whatever [wrong] any human being commits rests upon himself alone; and no bearer of burdens shall be made to bear another's burden" (6:164). These are eternal principles of justice as decreed by Allah. There is no way therefore that the burden of the children of Israel would fall onto the whole of mankind. If they had done wrong then only they alone would deserve to be chastised.

Furthermore, the decay of food items is a natural process. If such items were free from putrefaction before the children of Israel's involvement, then they would not have been alterable even in the stomach, in which case, the digestion system of man must have been different! As a matter of fact, man is created with certain elements in his body. In order to maintain physical health man needs water, carbohydrates, vitamins, proteins, minerals, iron etc. These nutrients are supplied by consumption of vegetables, fruit, water, lentils and so on, which in turn are vulnerable to decay because this is the nature of nutritious elements such as these. Man's digestion system demands that items consumed are of a putrid nature otherwise nothing would be digested and man would never be able to consume anything. There might be no evidence to prove that before the children of Israel dead animals did not putrefy but if this were the case man would not have been able to consume meat or digest it. The concept of death is a timeless reality and this together with the decay of edible items must be something which has always existed from the time Adam and Eve stepped onto the earth.

The second element of the tradition concerns Eve. Eve it is said was responsible for man's expulsion from Paradise because she duped Adam into eating the forbidden fruit. This cannot be true. The Qur'an presents the case of Eve in a different manner: "Then did Satan make them slip from the [garden], and get them out of the state [of felicity] in which they had been" (2:36). It is obvious from this verse that

Satan in fact tricked both Adam and Eve into taking the forbidden fruit contrary to the case as claimed by al-Nawawī. He advances the interpretation presented by al-Qāḍī that Satan persuaded Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, and Eve, then, did the same to Adam who took the fruit against the instruction of Allah.⁵⁸ The report goes against the Qur'anic statement and is hence unacceptable.

Al-ʿAynī's understanding of the statement concerning the role of Eve as reported in the tradition is that "she invited Adam to eat the fruit of that tree."⁵⁹ Ibn Ḥajar explains the role of Eve as "in this statement there is a reference to Eve's persuasion of Adam due to which Adam took from the forbidden tree. *Khiyānah* (dishonesty, violation of rules, infidelity) on the part of Eve means that she accepted what was presented to her by Satan in a beautiful manner; and she presented that idea to Adam in an attractive way."⁶⁰ Both these comments by al-ʿAynī and Ibn Ḥajar are classic examples of the Qur'an being sidelined in favor of authenticating a tradition recorded by al-Bukhārī. Had they even given the Qur'anic statement (2:36) a cursory examination, they would not have believed what they did. Once again, the Qur'an mentions clearly, that it was not Eve who forced Adam to do wrong but Satan who persuaded them both. Eve therefore is innocent of the charge leveled against her and should not be blamed for an action she did not commit.

It could be that the statement reported in the tradition was initially made by someone attempting to interpret verse 2:36 of the Qur'an, and later mistakenly reported as that of the Prophet. It was impossible for the Prophet to say anything that would be in contrast with the Qur'an, and in actual fact, it is the Bible which blames Eve for causing Adam to deviate from God's command. This is not to give credence to anyone's position concerning Eve because the original biblical revelation has been lost and its contents corrupted. In this situation, the truth lies with the Qur'an, and not with the Bible.

Finally, the report itself is a source of humiliation for women. Is it only the wife who commits infidelity? Are husbands not also unfaithful to their wives? Why point the finger of blame at women only? In reality infidelity whether on the part of the man or the woman, is not the result of Eve or Adam's error, but rather because Allah has created man with this capacity. The Qur'an says: "By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it, And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right"

(91:7–8). If a woman and man commit sin against each other, it is because they have the innate capability to do so. It is mankind's freedom of thought, choice and action that govern whether he does right or wrong.

10–Women, Houses, and Animals as Sources of Bad Omen

Al-Bukhārī, Muslim and others have recorded a tradition on the authority of ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar which confirms that in women, animals, and houses are bad omens. The tradition in the words of Muslim is: “The Prophet said: ‘If bad luck were true, it would be in the horse, the woman, and the house.’”⁶¹

Al-Khaṭṭābī tries to interpret this report by saying that “evil portent in terms of houses means insufficient space to live in and bad neighbors; in terms of women her impudent tongue and inability to conceive and give birth; and in terms of horses meaning those unfit for war.”⁶² Although this seems rather neatly put the wording of the tradition does not allow for this kind of interpretation. It is quite clear from al-Khaṭṭābī's interpretation that he does see a problem in the statement reported in the tradition but wanted to remove doubt concerning the authenticity of al-Bukhārī's recorded tradition. Ibn Ḥajar adopts the same approach. Although he quotes various views which reinforce the idea of the position of women being a source of bad omen, he himself is of the view expressed by al-Khaṭṭābī.⁶³

For al-Khaṭṭābī and Ibn Ḥajar the bad omen aspect of woman signifies her abusive language and inability to conceive. If the two scholars really maintain this position then one can counter, why confine the issue of evil omen to women only? Do not the same problems also exist in men? Abusive and offensive language and infertility/sterility are not the domain of women only. Although both sexes are involved men are somehow absolved according to the tradition. Why?

Can one honestly imagine the Prophet condemning women as bad omens? Of course not. The Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet and he was fully aware of the position of evil portents/omens. The Qur'an says: “But whenever good fortune alighted upon them, they would say, ‘This is [but] our due’; and whenever affliction befell them, they would blame their evil fortune on Moses and those who followed him. Oh, verily, their [evil] fortune had been decreed by God – but most of them

40. Ibid., p.144.
41. Ibid., p.146.
42. Ibid., p.150.
43. Ibid., p.156.
44. Ibid., pp.167–180.
45. Ibid., p.185.
46. Ibid. p.196.
47. Ibid., p.208.
48. Ibid., p.124.
49. Ibid., p.310.
50. Ibid., p.352.
51. Ibid., p.384.
52. Ibid., p.406.
53. Ibid., pp.439–440.
54. Ibid., p.461.
55. Ibid., p.478.

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3. Ibid.
4. Muslim, vol.3, “*Kitāb al-Janāʿiz*,” hadith no.2151.
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6. Ibid., pp.85–86.
7. Ibid., p.104.
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12. Al-Dumayni, Misfir Ghuram Allah, *Maqāyīs Naqd Mutūn al-Sunnah* (Riyadh: Self published by the author, 1403 AH), p.287.
13. Ibid., p.297.
14. Ibn al-Qayyim, Muḥammad ibn Abū Bakr, *Al-Manār al-Munīf fi al-Ṣaḥīḥ wa al-Ḍaʿīf*. Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghuddah, ed. (Ḥalab: Maktab al-Maṭbūʿāt al-Islāmiyyah, 1982), p.80.
15. Al-Bukhārī, vol.2, “*Kitāb al-Anbiyāʾ*,” hadith nos.3357–3358; Muslim, vol.8, “*Kitāb al-Faḍāʾil*,” hadith no.6097.
16. *Al-Muʿjam al-Wasīṭ*. Ibrahim Mustafa and others, eds. (Istanbul: Al-Maktabah al-Islāmiyyah, n.d.), p.511.
17. Al-Aṣḥānī, al-Rāghib, *Al-Mufradāt fi Gharīb al-Qurʾān* (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 1998), p.280.
18. Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bārī* (Riyadh: Dār al-Salām, 2000), vol.6, p.473.
19. Ibn al-ʿArabī, Abū Bakr, *Aḥkām al-Qurʾān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1996), vol.3, pp.262–263.
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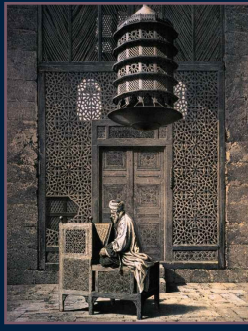
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31. Ibid., p. 358.
32. Al-Ālūsī, vol. 7, part 14, p. 502.
33. Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bārī*, vol. 11, p. 358; Ibn ‘Aṭṭīyyah, *Al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2001), vol. 3, p. 391.
34. Al-Bukhārī, vol. 2, “*Kitāb al-Jihād wa al-Siyar*,” hadith no. 2946; Muslim, “*Kitāb al-Īmān*,” hadith nos. 124–130.
35. Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bārī*, vol. 1, p. 105.
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39. *The Holy Bible* (Authorized King James Version, The Gideons International, 1978), Genesis 32:22–32.
40. Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bārī*, vol. 6, p. 538.
41. Ibid.
42. Muslim, vol. 8, hadith no. 6100.
43. Al-Nawawī, vol. 8, p. 128.
44. Al-Bukhārī, vol. 4, “*Kitāb al-Qadar*,” hadith no. 6614; Muslim, vol. 8, “*Kitāb al-Qadar*,” hadith nos. 6684–6689. The translation given above is based on the report according to Muslim’s report no. 6684.
45. Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bārī*, vol. 11, p. 622.
46. Ibid., p. 621.
47. Ibid., p. 623.
48. Muslim, vol. 9, “*Kitāb Ṣifāt al-Munāfiqīn*,” hadith no. 6985.
49. Ibid., “*Kitāb al-Tawbah*,” hadith no. 6942.
50. Ibid., hadith no. 6943–6944.
51. Ibid., hadith no. 6945.
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55. Muslim, vol. 9, “*Kitāb al-Tawbah*,” hadith no. 6943.
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In today's complex and volatile world the consequences of relying on fraudulent and counterfeit Hadith to legitimise extremist behaviour, issue violent fatwas, and justify blatant abuse, particularly of women, is not only far too easy but in fact dangerous. Israr Khan addresses the sensitive topic of Hadith authentication, focusing on the criteria adopted by classical scholars to maintain that concentration on the continuity and accuracy of the chain of narrators, rather than the textual content of Hadith, has led to particular Hadith being included which either contradict other Hadith directly, project the Prophet (SAAS) in an uncharacteristic light, or do not reflect and/or conflict with the teachings of the Qur'an. The study traces in careful detail the historical development of the oral and written traditions, as well as the many targeted attempts at fabrication that took place, critiquing in methodical detail certain Hadith which have come to be widely accepted as "authentic." The prominent collections we have today, were made possible by the development of the science of Hadith criticism, and Muslim scholars deserve deep appreciation for their painstaking work, as well as their invaluable contribution towards preserving the Hadith literature to the best of their ability. However, insists the author, the process is ongoing, and the closed door policy which currently surrounds Hadith authentication needs to be carefully reexamined.

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